



M O N T A N A
COALITION AGAINST
DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL
V I O L E N C E

TO: House Human Services Committee
FROM: Kelsen Young, Executive Director
Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
DATE: February 21, 2007
RE: HB 612 – Create responsible sexual health program

EXHIBIT 4
DATE 2-21-07
HB 612

Good afternoon Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record my name is Kelsen Young and I am the Executive Director of the Montana Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. We represent domestic and sexual violence programs providing direct services in your communities across the State. We rise in strong support of HB 612 and appreciate Representative Henry for bringing this bill forward.

HB 612 creates the Healthy Youth Program which will be administered by DPHHS. Essentially this program creates an opportunity for Montana's youth to receive a more comprehensive sex education program. As you may know, currently youth in our schools receive various forms of sex education but most funding is directed at abstinence-only education. We believe strongly that the youth of Montana need more information than an abstinence-only program provides. Specifically, we would like to draw your attention to the aspects of the program's requirements that focus on the prevention of dating violence and sexual violence. Please see page 2, subsection 4 for the specific components of the program. Our comments specifically pertain to components (f), (g), (i), (j), (k), and (l).

Dating and sexual violence are a reality for youth in Montana. National studies show that one in five teens in a serious relationship reports having been hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner. Even more staggering is the statistic that young women, ages 16-24, experience the **highest rates** of relationship violence. In terms of sexual violence towards teens, a recent study showed that in 2001, more than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 were the victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape. Also, twenty-nine percent of young girls in a relationship felt pressured to have sex or engage in sex they did not want. I have attached a brief fact sheet from the National Center for Victims of Crime, Teen Dating Violence Project, for your review.

In a report entitled "Our Vulnerable Teenagers: Their Victimization, Its Consequences, and Directions for Prevention and Intervention" the authors specifically recommend, as a strategy to curbing violence towards teens, that schools implement a sex education program with a focus on victimization prevention. The experts also say that early education and prevention works both ways – it informs young people of the potential to be victimized, and also teaches young people of their potential to become the perpetrator of these types of crimes.

After high school, young men and women are sent out into the world and have to navigate this world with whatever teachings they have been given from family, friends, their community, and our schools. It is our responsibility as a community to adequately inform young people of how to protect themselves from harm, how to make informed decisions, and how to make their communities better and healthier. In our opinion, currently we are simply not doing a good enough job. The creation of this new Healthy Youth program will allow us an opportunity to invest more in our youth and show them that we value their safety and their access to information.

We ask that you please support this bill and pass it out of committee. We are available to answer questions and provide any further background information to the committee.

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THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Victims of Crime

www.ncvc.org/tvp
Tel. 202-467-8700

Teen Dating Violence Fact Sheet

Crime victims can call
1-800-FYI-CALL
M-F 8:30 am—8:30 pm
or e-mail us at
gethelp@ncvc.org.

What Is Dating Violence?

Dating violence is controlling, abusive, and aggressive behavior in a romantic relationship. It occurs in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships and can include verbal, emotional, physical, or sexual abuse, or a combination of these behaviors.

Violent Behavior in Teen Relationships

- One of five teens in a serious relationship reports having been hit, slapped, or pushed by a partner.^a
- Young women, ages 16-24, experience the highest rates of relationship violence.^b
- Roughly one in 10 (9%) teens has been verbally or physically abused by a boyfriend or girlfriend who was drunk or high.^a
- Fourteen percent of teens report their boyfriend or girlfriend threatened to harm them or themselves to avoid a breakup.^a
- Teens identifying as gay, lesbian, and bisexual are as likely to experience violence in same-sex dating relationships as youths involved in opposite sex dating.^c
- Among older teens, the percentage of violent crime involving an intimate partner was 10 times higher for females than males (9 % versus 0.6 %).^d
- Many studies indicate that as a dating relationship becomes more serious, the potential for and nature of violent behavior also escalates.^e

Dating Violence and the Law

- All 50 states and the District of Columbia have laws against dating violence-associated crimes such as sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking. However, the specific term "dating violence" is rarely used in these laws.
- Thirty-five states allow minors to obtain civil protection orders against dating partners, with various restrictions depending upon the age of the minor.

Links to Other Forms of Violence

- In 2001, more than 97,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 were victims of alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape.^f
- Twelve percent of respondents in a study on violence against women reported having been stalked before the age of 18.^g
- There is a connection between using violence against peers and using sexual and physical violence against dates, with stronger correlations for boys than girls.^h
- Several studies have found that child maltreatment, defined by a combination of family violence indicators such as child abuse, corporal punishment, child sexual abuse, and exposure to domestic violence, is positively correlated with dating abuse perpetration.ⁱ

Who Can Help

- Crisis hotlines and helplines can provide immediate assistance and referrals to sexual assault or domestic violence programs that provide advocacy, counseling, safety planning, legal assistance, emergency shelter, and support groups.
- School-based student assistance programs, guidance offices, and school resource officers can provide guidance on school policies and sanctions for violent behaviors by students or on campus.
- Legal options include calling the police, seeking protective orders, and cooperating with criminal prosecution.

a Liz Claiborne Inc., "Study on Teen Dating Abuse," (Teenage Research Unlimited, 2005), <http://www.loveisnotabuse.com> (accessed February 1, 2007).

b C.M. Rennison and S. Welchans, "BJS Special Report: Intimate Partner Violence," (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000).

c L.L. Kupper, et al., "Prevalence of Partner Violence in Same-Sex Romantic and Sexual Relationships in a National Sample of Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 35 (2004): 124-131.

d Katrina Baum, "Juvenile Victimization and Offending, 1993-2003," (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005).

e *Teen Dating Violence Resource Manual*, (Denver: National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, 1997), 17.

f Ralph W. Hingson, et al., "Magnitude of Alcohol-Related Mortality and Morbidity among U.S. College Students Ages 18-24: Changes from 1998 to 2001," *Annual Review of Public Health* 26 (2005): 267.

g P. Tjaden and N. Thoennes, "Stalking in America: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey," (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1998).

h E.J. Ozer, et al., "Violence Perpetration across Peer and Partner Relationships: Co-occurrence and Longitudinal Patterns among Adolescents," *Journal of Adolescent Health* 34 (2004): 64-71.

i D.A. Wolfe, et al., "Predicting Abuse in Adolescent Dating Relationships over 1 Year: The Role of Child Maltreatment and Trauma," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 113 (2004): 406-415.